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Florida Attorney General's Office News Release

2021 Fla. School Resource Officer of the Year Announced

TALLAHASSEE, Fla.—Attorney General Ashley Moody, along with the Florida Association of School Resource Officers, today recognized school resource officers going above and beyond the call of duty at the FASRO conference in Orlando. At the conference, Attorney General Moody virtually presented Corporal Elissa Elders of the Pasco County Sheriff's Office with the 2021 School Resource Officer of the Year award. Elders has shown exemplary work in protecting and engaging with the students of Pine View Middle School for the past seven years.

Attorney General Ashley Moody said, "Corporal Elders is a shining example of what every school resource officer should aspire to be—a role model, mentor and friend to the students at her school. Corporal Elders does not limit her role to just providing security on campus, she goes above and beyond her professional requirements to personally engage with and better the lives of the students she serves.

"From founding and sponsoring multiple clubs on campus, to participating in school productions, Corporal Elders is just as dedicated to being present for students once the school day is complete. Thank you, Corporal Elders, for all that you do to enrich the lives of the students you serve—leaving a lasting impact far beyond their time at Pine View."

Elders is a 15-year law enforcement veteran and has served as an SRO for the past seven years at PVMS, acting as an advocate and resource to PVMS students, faculty or staff in need of help or guidance. Elders sponsors and personally pays for the expenses of multiple clubs, including Girls on the Run, Craft Club and the Walking Dead Fan Club to reach and engage with a wide variety of students on campus. Elders also began the SRO for a Day program on campus, selecting students to spend the day patrolling the campus and enjoying lunch of their choosing with Elders.

Elders' work is not limited to the PVMS campus. During last year's remote learning, Elders went above and beyond to make a student's birthday special by attending a virtual birthday party, complete with a decorated patrol car, birthday cake and signs. On a separate occasion, Elders noticed a student struggling with anxiety. Elders identified the student's interest in the weather and began to track and discuss hurricanes with the student to mitigate symptoms of the student's anxiety. Elders went on to arrange for the student's favorite meteorologist to send the student a personal message of support.

In addition to the SRO of the Year award, Attorney General Moody recognized four deputy sheriffs and police officers from around the state who earned the School Resource Officer Practitioner designation as school resource officer practitioners after completing a rigorous

training program offered by the Office of the Attorney General’s Criminal Justice Programs:

- Deputy Sonya Shepard, of the Okaloosa County Sheriff's Office;
- Deputy Jeremy Williams, of the Sumter County Sheriff's Office;
- Officer Scott Finnen, of the Levy County Sheriff's Office; and
- Sergeant Andrew Davis, of the Alachua County Sheriff's Office.

In 1985, the Attorney General’s Office developed the first 40-hour basic training course, adopted by the Florida Department of Law Enforcement, to train school resource officers with the basic knowledge and skills necessary to implement crime prevention programming in a school setting. Together, the Attorney General’s Office, FASRO, the Florida Department of Education and FDLE have jointly provided several trainings throughout the years to develop effective prevention programs and strategies for students and campuses. Each year, applications for the School Resource Officer of the Year are submitted to the Attorney General’s Office for review.